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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES, INCLUDING PALESTINE

Letter dated 15 March 2002 from the Permanent Observer for Palestine to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Israeli occupation forces committed a number of crimes against the holy shrines in Bethlehem. They have burned and demolished the Wooden Cross and another cross, a present by an American Bishop to "Dar Al Kalimate" School. They have used their machine guns and ranks to shell rockets at the church and hospital of the Holy Family, causing damage to the church including the Virgin Mary's statue which sustained 20 shots from heavy machine guns.

At 4 p.m., Thursday, 14 March, the Israeli occupation forces caused the death of a Palestinian baby boy at a roadblock near "Netsarim" settlement to the south of Gaza by denying passage to the ambulance which was to transport him together with two other children from al-Aqsa hospital in Deir al-Balah to al-Nasr children's hospital in Gaza. The ambulance was blocked at the roadblock for 1 hour and 45 minutes during which time the child died because of respiratory problems. His life could have been saved had the Israeli occupation forces not prevented the ambulance from taking him to hospital in time.

This way, the Israeli occupation forces are varying their crimes against humanity and against holy shrines together with their symbols in their criminal war against the Palestinian people, violating in this way the principles of human rights, particularly the right to life, the right of belief and all international human rights-related charters, treaties and conventions.

I would be grateful if you could arrange to have this letter distributed as an official document of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on Human Rights under agenda item 8.

(Signed) Nabil RAMLAWI
Ambassador
Permanent Observer

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